

The Messiah by *Vox Populi* versus the Messiah by *Vox Dei*.

—An examination of the Relationship between Jesus of Nazareth and John the Baptist in the New Testament. Part II: The Gospel of Mark.—

Janusz KUCICKI

Abstract

The study concerns the exposition of the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospel of Mark. Both persons were involved in socio-religious movements that in different ways were headed for a common aim. The differences in the attitudes of both movements, and the Jewish society's evaluation of these movements are subjects of analysis in this study. The results of the analysis expose the relations between these two movements and their leaders, which is the main aim of Mark's exposition of this topic. Mark indicates in the last account regarding the relationship (Mk 11: 27–33) that both John and Jesus' authorities comes from God; however, there is a difference between these authorities as John only possesses the authority of a prophet, while Jesus possesses the authority of the Messiah.

Introduction

This study, the second part of a series of articles regarding the topic of the relationship between Jesus of Nazareth and John the Baptist in the New Testament, with a particular focus on their messianic dignity, is concerned with the exposition of the topic in the Gospel of Mark. Although the Gospel of Matthew (the subject of the first article) and the Gospel of Mark both belong to the writings commonly known as the “Synoptic Gospels”, due to the considerable similarities between them, there are radical differences in the exposition of the same events in both of them. These differences have their source in the different theological, historical, sociological and practical approaches of the individual authors. In this study, exposition of the topic in the Gospel of Mark will be compared with that of the exposition found in the Gospel of Matthew. This will help us to recognize the differences in the presentation of the relationship between John and Jesus as described by each of the authors.

1. Introduction of John the Baptist

The first text (Mk 1: 2–8) contains the presentation of John the Baptist and his activities, which is of critical importance for following the exposition of the relationship between Jesus of

Nazareth and John the Baptist. For this reason, Mark places the introduction of John at the very beginning of his Gospel.

1.1. The Text of Mk 1: 2–8

² Καθὼς γέγραπται ἐν τῷ Ἡσαΐα τῷ προφήτῃ· ἰδοὺ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου· ³ φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ, ⁴ ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης [ὁ] βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. ⁵ καὶ ἐξεπορεύετο πρὸς αὐτὸν πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία χώρα καὶ οἱ Ἱεροσολυμίται πάντες, καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ ἐξομολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν. ⁶ καὶ ἦν ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐνδεδυμένος τρίχας καμήλου καὶ ζώνην δερματίνην περὶ τὴν ὀσφὺν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐσθίων ἀκρίδας καὶ μέλι ἄγριον. ⁷ Καὶ ἐκήρυσσεν λέγων· ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου ὀπίσω μου, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανὸς κύψας λῦσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ. ⁸ ἐγὼ ἐβάπτισα ὑμᾶς ὕδατι, αὐτὸς δὲ βαπτίσει ὑμᾶς ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ. (Mk 1: 4–8)

² *As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way;*

³ *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight.'"* ⁴ *John [the] Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. ⁶ John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."* (Mk 1: 4–8)

1.2. Literary Analysis of the Text

Mark starts his introduction of John with a short but very comprehensive account, where each word exposes with precision John's characteristics according to Mark. This presentation naturally begins with John's name, which is specified by the participle [ὁ] βαπτίζων that became the equivalent of a surname or nickname pointing to his most characteristic action of the religious nature regarding baptism in the Jordan River (Mk 1: 4). Next, John's activities are placed in hardly a specified way, such as pointing to the desert in a very general manner, however this allows us to identify the desert as the Judea Desert, and the place of baptismal activities as some place near the Jordan River¹. The last information provided by the verse concerns John's activities, which involved "proclaiming a baptism." John encouraged people to take baptism from him as the symbol of repentance, which he presents as the indispensable condition for the forgiveness of sins². In this way, the activities of John challenged the

¹ M. L. Struass, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Mark*, Zondervan 2014, Grand Rapids, pp. 63–64.

² Both the meaning and origin of John's baptism are subjects of discussion between scholars. The main two theories view John's baptism as a "ritual washing" similar to that performed by the Qumran society, or as "proselyte baptism", which usually concerns Gentiles turning to Judaism. In this particular Jewish context, the second proposition would suggest that John treats Jews of Judea as Gentiles in regards to practicing Judaism, which would be a very severe and

traditional Jewish way of seeking forgiveness for sins. This alternative way for the forgiveness of sins brought considerable attention on Judean inhabitancy as Mk 1: 5 indicates it. Mention of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem strongly suggests that John's activities were wildly recognized and accepted, which indicates that the nation answered John's call for repentance. The response to John's call is indirectly connected with his lifestyle (Mk 1: 6) and his message to the nation (Mk 1: 7), where his lifestyle suggests that John departed from social standards, living an uncivilized life in the wilderness, most likely in order to amplify his message³. John's message is strictly eschatological but not apocalyptic, because he proclaims the change of the world but not the end of the world. The change concerns the coming of the One to whom John compares himself with an inferior attitude. According to John, the One is mightier than him, and the baptism of the One will be of a different nature than his. However, the One will appear after John, which makes his activities to be a necessary preparation. Before the One will fulfill the promises of the prophets from olden times by baptizing the nation with the power of the Holy Spirit, John, with his baptism with water, is preparing the hearts and minds of the nation, in order they may recognize the One. In this way, John serves a higher purpose that can't be achieved by him, but he participates in achieving that purpose as the servant of the One who will achieve it.

1.3. Exposition of the Relationship between John and Jesus

Concerning the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus, only the last two verses of the pericope (Mk 1: 7–8) refer to the topic. The beginning of verse 7 indicates that the exposition of the relationship between John and Jesus was a part of John's proclaiming (teaching)⁴, which however, directly comes from John's exposition of the real goal of his activities that have a preparatory character, rather than from a personal comparison between them. John directly says that someone (Jesus) mightier than him will appear as the result and final aim of his mission. The One after John will do things that John himself cannot do (baptism with the Holy Spirit), and this fact makes John subordinate to Him. This subordination is shaped as a relationship between a lord and a servant, where the second role is attributed to John, which allows the exposition to redirect the people's attention away from John and towards the one mightier than he. However, this redirection does not merely concern the persons of John and Jesus, rather it directly indicates the beginning of the eschatological times, when God's promise regarding baptism with the Holy Spirit will be fulfilled. Mark presents the

negative evaluation of the Jewish nation. We opt for the originality of John's baptism, but for different reasons than Meier suggests. J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Doubleday 2008, New York/London, Vol. 2, pp. 49–56.

³ Note that Flavius mentions the wilderness as the place where the messianic movements were born (JW. 13.4–5, 259–263; 6.6.3, 351). The information that all people were going to him may suggest that inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea recognized John as the Messiah. In this context, John's confession in Mk 1: 7 could be taken as his denying such a claim.

⁴ The imperfect form of the verb indicates that the comparison of John's baptism to the baptism that will be performed by the One coming after him was an important part of John's preparation of the nation for the coming of the Messiah.

relationship between John and Jesus in a strict, Christological context, where the realization of God's plan is the primary aim for both of them, with exception to the different levels of realization (preparation for John, and fulfillment for Jesus). For Mark, Jesus is the One who realized God's plan, and John shares a part in the necessary preparation before the appearance of the Messiah. This presentation of their relationship shapes the readers' understanding of the ontological difference between John and Jesus, without antagonizing the relationship itself.

1.4. Comparison of the Presentation of the Relationship between the Narratives of Mk 1: 4–8 and Mt 3: 1–12

Concerning the comparison of both introductions (Mt 3: 1–12 and Mk 1: 4–8), there are several interesting differences and nuances, which despite general agreement of both narratives, show the different attitudes of both authors for the exposition of John and his religious activities. The first difference regards a containing of John's teaching, since according to Mark, John was proclaiming "*a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*" According to Matthew, he proclaimed "*repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" Although in both narratives the main point of John's teaching concerns "repentance", the exposition of the topic shows a few important changes. In Mark's version, repentance is related to "*the forgiveness of sins*", which in the whole context of the New Testament, indicates the Christological approach of Mark, since forgiveness of sins is axiomatically connected to the death of Jesus as the Savior. However, according to Matthew, John proclaimed repentance as something necessary in eschatological times, which strongly exposes Matthew's eschatological approach (Mt 3: 7). It also is worthy to note that Mark shows the proclamation in a strictly narrative manner (third person singular), while Matthew puts the proclamation directly in the words of John (first person singular).

The second difference regards the way of quoting the Jewish Scriptures, namely Is 40: 3⁵. In the case of Matthew's quotation of Is 40: 3, only a few minor corrections were made, and these did not change the main message of the prophet, because Matthew in his exposition follows the Isaiah's eschatological perspective. Contrary to Matthew, Mark makes several changes that causes a modification of the message compared to the original. In Mk 1: 2–3, only verse 3 contains a quotation from Is 40: 3, but verse 2 is a compilation of Ex 23: 20 and Mal 3: 1. The addition in Mark was included in order to expose the messenger (John) and the Lord (Jesus). In this way, from the very beginning of his Gospel, Mark puts attention on the relationship between John and Jesus, with a special focus on exposing Jesus as the Lord and John as just the messenger.

The third difference concerns the meaning of the baptism performed by John and baptism that will be performed by Jesus. John says that he baptizes people with water, which indicates the human origin of his action, and his action is compared to Jesus' baptism with the Holy

⁵ φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν (BGT: Is 40: 3)
:קול קורא במדבר פנ דרך יתנה ישרו בעצרה מסלה לאלהינו (WTT: Is 40: 3)

A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God" (NAS: Is 40: 3).

Spirit. This not only indicates the divine origin of Jesus' baptism, but also directly presents baptism as the fulfilment of God's promise. This kind of exposition strongly suggests a Christological approach to the topic. Concerning the baptism in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 3: 11–12), John himself (first person singular) characterizes it as baptism with water for repentance, which is a statement that agrees with that exposed in Mt 3: 2. John also compares his baptism to the baptism that will be performed by Jesus, which is baptism with the Holy Spirit, but directly connected to judgment as Mt 3: 12 strongly suggests. This exposes the fact that Matthew sees Jesus' baptism in a strictly eschatological context (Mt 3: 11–12), which is in accord with the exposition found in Mt 3: 2, with a focus on the negative aspects of the eschatological event (judgment).

The first exposition of John in the Gospel of Mark, in accordance with Mark's main approach in his Gospel, has a strong Christological background. Compared to Mark, the Gospel of Matthew's exposition of John is characterized by its strict eschatological background, an approach related to Matthew's understanding of Jesus' case as the fulfilment of the end times.

2. The First and the Only Encounter of John and Jesus (Mk 1: 9–11)

Despite the fact that the theme of the relationship between Jesus and John is successively progressing in the narrative of the Gospel, the direct encounter between Jesus and John appears only once in Mark's narrative (Mk 1: 9–11), which naturally raises reasonable surprise. Even more unexpected is the way Mark has narrated it.

2.1. The Text of Mk 1: 9–11

⁹ Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ Ναζαρετ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου. ¹⁰ καὶ εὐθὺς ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν. ¹¹ καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν. σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα. (Mk 1: 9–11)

⁹ And it came about in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; ¹¹ and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are my beloved son, in you I am well-pleased." (Mk 1: 10–11)

2.2. Literary Analysis of the Text⁶

The narrative concerning Jesus' encounter with John is characterized by its strictly

⁶ Because the text of Mk 1: 9–11 in general terms agrees with text of Mt 3: 13–17 in parts regarding the same topic (Mk 3: 9–11 = Mt 3: 13.16–17), the analysis of Mk 1: 9–11 will be limited to those subjects which were not analyses in our article: *The Messiah by the Vox Populi Versus the Messiah by the Vox Dei. Exposition of the Relationship between Jesus of Nazareth and John the Baptist in the New Testament. Part I: The Gospel of Matthew.*

informative approach, where the only emotional aspect can be found in Mk 1: 11, though it concerns the relationship between God and Jesus, not Jesus and John. From Mark, first we learn that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, which indirectly places Jesus and his hometown outside the Judean Jewish circle (Mk 1: 9). The information about Jesus coming to John is connected with John's baptism activities (Mk 1: 2–8), which indirectly shows that John's movement was well known also outside Judea, and probably Jesus was not the only one from Galilee attracted by this movement. Concerning baptism, Mark wrote that Jesus “*was baptized in the Jordan by John*”, which is the shortest account that could possibly be made, where the role of John is reduced to the kind of mediator, and Jesus' baptism is just a separated and sudden event⁷. We know only who was baptized, by whom he was baptized and where he was baptized. This approach must be surprising, especially if we consider Matthew's narrative concerning Jesus' baptism presented in Mt 3: 13–14. Putting so little attention into the details of Jesus' baptism has its reason and purpose, but that subject will be elaborated in the next point of this study. Mark was not much interested in elaborating Jesus' baptism narrative, contrary to the event that occurred after the baptism. The baptism is uncompromisingly separated from Jesus' revelation (Mk 1: 10) by Mark's statement αἱ εὐθὺς ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος - *and immediately coming up out of the water*. This indicates that although the revelation occurred after the baptism, these two events are separated also by changing the protagonists for each of the events⁸. The protagonist in the baptism of Jesus was John, but the protagonist in the revelation is God. In verse 10, Mark includes the revelation (*the heavens opening*) during which Jesus was baptized with the Holy Spirit. Than the narrative regarding the Jesus' baptism with water by John, is not followed by the progressing exposition of relationship between John and Jesus, the account of Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit is following by God's testimony to Jesus. Mark pays special attention to underline God's testimony, which contains the recognition of Jesus as the beloved son, and the evaluation of Jesus as the one God is “*well pleased*” in⁹. In this event, Jesus is the passive one, and God is permanently acting, which means he had done nothing, but he received everything from God. Considering the purpose of Mark's Gospel, it is possible to assume that the sequence of Jesus' baptism and his anointing may serve for the readers as a kind of theological explanation for the baptism and confirmation rites, where the first takes the meaning of a cleansing from sins in order to make it possible for the second one, which is the receiving of the Holy Spirit¹⁰. Both of these rites are necessary for

⁷ J. R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Eerdmans 2002, Grand Rapids, p. 34.

⁸ France wrote: εὐθὺς is used “usually to introduce a new incident, or a dramatic new phrase within an episode”. Since the event of Jesus' anointing is far from a dramatic event, we accept the first possibility, namely that of introducing a new incident. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, Eerdmans 2002, Grand Rapids, p. 76.

⁹ Strauss sees in God's testimony (Mk 1: 11) a compilation of texts from the Old Testament, where the phrase “*you are my beloved son*” references Ps 2: 7; Gn 22: 2, and the phrase “*I am well-pleased*” references Is 42: 1. Considering the particular context of all references, Strauss interpreted verse 11 in this way: [the] acclamation presents Jesus as the David's Messiah and unique Son of God”. M. L. Strauss, *Mark. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Zondervan 2014, Grand Rapids, p. 73.

¹⁰ Cf. R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8*, 26, Thomas Nelson 1989, Mexico City, pp. 31–32.

Christians to become “well pleased” by God.

2.3. Exposition of the Relationship between John and Jesus

The narrative of Mark reduces the direct encounter between Jesus and John to the single event that is recorded in one single sentence (Mk 1: 9). Mark wrote that Jesus came to a place where John was baptizing, which is information about Jesus' interest in John's mission. Indirectly, it points to John's activities as a well-known movement whose importance was also recognized in places outside Judea. Mark does not directly indicate Jesus' reason for his coming to John; however, the second part of Mk 1: 9 states that Jesus was baptized by John, which suggests that baptism was the main reason for Jesus' encounter with John. The account of Jesus' baptism significantly differs from the general account of John's activities as it is presented in Mk 1: 5. There is no mention of Jesus' confession before the baptism, nor is it clear if Jesus was baptized in public or privately. The former possibility is preferred due to the general characteristic of the way John's baptisms were performed (Mk 1: 4). However, the private context of the narrative regarding Jesus' revelation (Mk 1: 10–11) seems to favor the latter possibility. The fact that Mark links John with Judea and Jesus with Nazareth in Galilee and missing in the narrative is any sign of personal relation between John and Jesus during the baptism, strongly suggests the lack of Jesus' involvement in John's ministry. The shortness of the narrative results in nothing specific about the relation between John and Jesus being stated, however, Mark's exposition of Jesus' baptism shows his tendency to not connect Jesus with John in a direct manner. Instead, Mark directly connects the events of Jesus' baptism with the event of Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit, which may suggest his attempt to keep the rule of John the Baptist strictly on the level that God, by the words of the prophet, said about him “ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου - *I sent My messenger*” (Mk 1: 2), if compared with God's word concerning Jesus “σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός - *You are my beloved son*” (Mk 1: 11). Definitely, Mark in Mk 1: 9–11 puts his focus exclusively on Jesus and his anointing, giving the relation between John and Jesus very little attention, probably in order to show the relation between Jesus and God (Mk 1: 10–11).

2.4. Comparison of the Relationship between John and Jesus as it is Presented in Mk 1: 9–11 and Mt 3: 1–12.

Both Gospels (Mt and Mk) contain the narratives regarding John baptizing Jesus (Mt 3: 13–17; Mk 1: 9–11), with the shorter one being Mark's narrative. Compared to Matthew's narrative, Mark more precisely identifies Jesus' hometown (Nazareth in Galilee - Mk 1: 9) than Matthew, who states only the region (Galilee - Mt 3: 13). However, both of them in the same way indicate the place of John's activities (the Jordan River - Mt 3: 13; Mk 1: 9). Regarding baptism, according to Matthew, “Jesus came to the Jordan to John to be baptized” (active approach), which indicates a kind of subordination of Jesus to John in the matter concerning baptism (Mt 3: 13–15). On the contrary, Mark just says: “Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan” (passive approach), which is merely information that hardly indicates any kind of personal relationship. Probably, instead of connecting the person of Jesus with the person of John, Mark consciously connected the event of Jesus' baptism with the event of Jesus'

anointing¹¹. Concerning the comparison of the narratives regarding Jesus' revelation, there are very few and hardly any relevant differences in these two accounts, which directly indicates that contrary to the account concerning Jesus' baptism, where Matthew and Mark take a different approach, in case of the revelation, both of them show almost perfect agreement. This justifies suspicions about "borrowing this part of the narrative from another".

3. The Fate of John and Jesus (Mk 1: 14)

This extremely short account (Mk 1: 14) serves in the narrative as the turning point marking the change of Mark's focus from John the Baptist to Jesus of Nazareth, who will become the main agent in the narrative regarding the relationship between Jesus and John.

3.1. The Text of Mk 1: 14

¹⁴ Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ (Mk 1: 14)

¹⁴ *After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God* (Mk 1: 14)

3.2. Literary Analysis of the Text

This very short text informs readers that Jesus' departed from Judea just after John was arrested, which indirectly suggests that after his baptism and the revelation, Jesus stayed in Judea for a considerable span of time. Mark says nothing about the time Jesus spent in Judea, nor does he say anything about possible co-operation between John and Jesus during this time. Regarding the arrest of John, striking is the lack of background information that would explain the reason for his imprisonment¹². It suggests that Mark's interest does not concern the fate of John, but rather this information is included in order to precisely introduce the circumstances that related to the beginning of Jesus' messianic activity. Information regarding the message (beginning of the eschatological times) proclaimed by Jesus in Galilee (Mk 1: 14–15) shows that the main interest of Mark to include this information lies in the separation of Jesus' activity from John's activity, which, although was prior to Jesus' activity, ends before Jesus started his public teaching in Galilee¹³.

¹¹ Mark does entirely omit the dialog between John and Jesus that is included in Matthew's narrative (Mt 3: 14–15), which is an attitude that to a great degree reduces the effect of Jesus' subordination to John during the baptism, leaving the reader with a kind of hardly narrated mystery. Cf. M. E. Boring, *Mark*, Westminster John Knox Press 2006, Louisville, pp. 44–45; R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8*, 26, pp. 42–43.

¹² The reason will be explicated in Mk 6: 14–16.

¹³ B. Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, Eerdmans 2001, Grand Rapids, p. 79.

3.3. Exposition of the Relationship between John and Jesus

Mk 1: 14–15 shows John as the leader of the messianic movement in Judea and Jesus as the leader of the messianic movement in Galilee. Regarding John's movement, Mark, after briefly describing the characteristics of his activity in Mk 1: 1–8, here, without necessary expansions just informs us that John was imprisoned¹⁴. It will be in Mk 6: 14–29 when we will learn that the arrest of John (Mk 1: 14) has ended his active leadership of the messianic movement established by him. John never again will be actively involved in progressing his movement, which will survive his death and continue with considerable success for several years after¹⁵. However, Mark says nothing about it, neither in Mk 1: 14 nor in other places in his Gospel, which automatically means that, *de facto*, John disappeared from Mark's narrative as the active protagonist. He is mentioned in the following narratives only in a passive way, namely, John is not acting anymore, contrary he became an subject of people evaluations. This suggests that the narrative of Mk 1: 14 indicates that the activity of John and his movement was fulfilled, namely, because it has prepared others for the appearance of Jesus and his movement (Mk 1: 9–11), which is a conclusion that strongly suggests that the activity of John and his movement is no longer required¹⁶. Myers puts it in a more radical way saying, "*Jesus commences his proclamation of the kingdom after John had been arrested (1: 14), taking up the mantle of the fallen prophet*"¹⁷. The last statement suggests that in terms of social perspective, John lost to the power of this world, and his story does not include a happy ending (contrary to Jesus). All this makes for a strong suggestion that for Mark, although John is a necessary and important figure in the plan of salvation, he is just a second-plan hero that was set-up to introduce the main character of his story, whom is exclusively Jesus of Nazareth.

Concerning Jesus' exposition in Mk 1: 14, the author directly indicates that Jesus' messianic activity began after John's messianic activity reached its sudden end. In this way, Mark does not connect Jesus' activity with John's activity, however, it is not the only sign of Mark's separative perspective on these two movements, because he also changes the place for the narrative concerning Jesus' messianic activity. The fact that Jesus begins his activity in Galilee and not in Judea may be viewed as another way to separate this messianic movement from John's messianic movement. For this reason, the statement of Myers that "*Jesus commences his proclamation of the kingdom after John had been arrested (1: 14), taking up the mantle of the fallen prophet*" seems to be doubtful because, Jesus does not continue John's messianic movement; he, according to Mark, established his own messianic movement in a different place and after John's activities came to the end¹⁸. Mark's John was teaching baptism for the

¹⁴ The text lacks an explanation concerning the reason for John's imprisonment, as well as information about an authority that did it to him. This information, Mark left for Mk 6: 14–29 that describes Herod's consciousness about Jesus. M. Healy, *The Gospel of Mark*, Baker Academic 2008, Grand Rapids, p. 40.

¹⁵ Mk 6: 14

¹⁶ In this way, Mark indirectly puts limitations on John's movement, possibly suggesting that after the beginning of Jesus' activities, John's movement is not necessary in existence. Cf. J. R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, pp. 44–45.

¹⁷ Ch. Myers, *Binding the Strong Man. A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, Orbis Book 1988, New York, p. 131.

¹⁸ Myers' statement can be justified if one considers the narrative of John regarding the relationship between Jesus and

forgiveness of the sins (Mk 1: 4) and directly spoke about the coming of someone more powerful than he (Mk 1: 7–8). The summary of Jesus' teaching at the beginning of his activities in Galilee exposes two statements regarding the temporary state of things (*the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand*), and two requirements concerning the attitude of the hearers (*repent and believe in the Gospel*). According to Mark's narrative, both teachings are different in their merits, and even the requirement of repentance, which is included in both teachings, has a different aim. In our opinion, Mark, in his Gospel, radically and purposely separated John's messianic movement from Jesus' messianic movement.

3.4. Comparison of the Relationship between John and Jesus as it is Presented in Mk 1: 14 and Mt 4: 12

Although information regarding the arrest of John and Jesus' departure from Judea to Galilee in both narratives seems to be similar, some nuances can be detected. According to Mark (Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ - *and after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God*). Jesus' action occurred after John had been taken into custody (Mk 1: 14), which indicates that Mark keeps the narrative on a level that strictly amplified the sequence of the occurrences, namely, that Jesus didn't come to Galilee when John was still actively involved in his mission, but rather after John's imprisonment. This exposition says more about the time of Jesus going to Galilee than about the reason for his action. Using of verb ἔρχομαι - *come, go* exposes the very general character of the information presented in Mk 1: 14, which is a similar attitude also used in the narrative concerning Jesus' coming to Judea (Mk 1: 9). It suggests that the information is hardly specified¹⁹.

Matthew's version (Mt 4: 12) of Jesus' return to Galilee (Ἀκούσας δὲ ὅτι Ἰωάννης παρεδόθη ἀνεχώρησεν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν - *now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee*) in literary terms is similar to Mark's version (Mk 1: 14). However, contrary to Mark, Matthew seems to give a reason for Jesus' withdrawal to Galilee. Matthew's statement, *when he heard that John had been arrested*, strongly indicates that Jesus reacted directly to John's arrest, which may indicate indirectly some kind of unrest on the side of Jesus²⁰. The attempt to specify this unrest, as one naturally would, has a highly speculative character, and for this reason it

John (J 3: 23–36). However, Mark's narrative does not allow this kind of statement.

¹⁹ Gould wrote: "We are not told whether Jesus came into Galilee because of the imprisonment of John, and being here, began his ministry; or whether he began his ministry because John's was ended, and chose Galilee as the scene for it". E. P. Gould, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, Charles Scribner's Sons 1896, New York, 15. Although Mk 1: 14 does not really specify which of the possibilities is more likely, we personally favor the second option.

²⁰ Osborn, following J 1–5, wrote that "during that time Jesus interspersed ministry in Judea and Galilee, even in Samaria", which may suggest that after John had been arrested, Jesus abandoned his ministry in Judea, and withdrew to a safer place, namely, Galilee. G. R. Osborne, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Matthew*, Zondervan 2010, Grand Rapids, p. 141. However, Matthew does not detail Jesus' mission activities before John has been arrested; on the contrary, he presents the period of Jesus staying in Judea as the time of necessary preparation before his ministry will begin (Mt 3: 13–4: 12).

seems to be reasonable to not encounter this problem. However, even without specifying Jesus' unrest, it is possible to conclude that Matthew presents Jesus' reaction to John's arrest in a much more personal way than Mark did in Mk 1: 14. For some reason, after John had been arrested, Matthew's Jesus decided to start his messianic movement in Galilee instead of Judea, and his decision was probably to some extent influenced by John's misfortune.

4. Controversy about Fasting (Mk 2: 18–22)

In the narrative regarding the relation between John and Jesus, the account of Mk 2: 18–20 is a comparison of the two messianic movements heading for a common aim but exposing sharply differences in ways to achieve the aim. In Mark's narrative, the agent comparing the attitude are people, which allows this comparison to be made by an outside observer.

4.1. The Text of Mk 2: 18–22

¹⁸ Καὶ ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι νηστεύοντες, καὶ ἔρχονται καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· διὰ τί οἱ μαθηταὶ Ἰωάννου καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ τῶν Φαρισαίων νηστεύουσιν, οἱ δὲ σοὶ μαθηταὶ οὐ νηστεύουσιν; ¹⁹ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· μὴ δύναται οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος ἐν ᾧ ὁ νυμφίος μετ' αὐτῶν ἐστὶν νηστεύειν; ὅσον χρόνον ἔχουσιν τὸν νυμφίον μετ' αὐτῶν οὐ δύναται νηστεύειν. ²⁰ ἔλεύσονται δὲ ἡμέραι ὅταν ἀπαρθῇ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὁ νυμφίος, καὶ τότε νηστεύσουσιν ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ. ²¹ Οὐδεὶς ἐπίβλημα ῥάκους ἀγνάφου ἐπιράπτει ἐπὶ ἱμάτιον παλαιόν· εἰ δὲ μή, αἶρει τὸ πλήρωμα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ καινὸν τοῦ παλαιοῦ καὶ χεῖρον σχίσμα γίνεται. ²² καὶ οὐδεὶς βάλλει οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς παλαιούς· εἰ δὲ μή, ῥήξει ὁ οἶνος τοὺς ἀσκοὺς καὶ ὁ οἶνος ἀπόλλυται καὶ οἱ ἀσκοί· ἀλλ' οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς καινοὺς. (Mk 2: 18–22)

¹⁸ *The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were accustomed to fast. People came to him and objected, "Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"* ¹⁹ *Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast."* ²⁰ *But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.* ²¹ *No one sews a piece of unshrinking cloth on an old cloak. If he does, its fullness pulls away, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse.* ²² *Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined. Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins.* (Mk 2: 18–22)

4.2. Literary Analysis of the Text.

The text of Mk 2: 18–22 is one of the four texts concerning the controversial attitudes of Jesus and his disciples (Mk 2: 1–28). It is the only text in this section that includes an example of John's disciples, who together with the Pharisees, are described as behaving contrary to Jesus' disciples²¹. The question of the people concerns the practice of fasting, commonly

²¹ The verb ἔρχομαι in third person plural (Mk 2: 18) may indicate John's disciples and Pharisees, however, the following part of the verse strongly suggests that some people were asking the question regarding the different attitude of Jesus'

observed by Pharisees in a fashion that greatly exceeded the common obligation of Judaism, as well as by John's disciples, who probably followed the very strict lifestyle of their founder²².

The reason for the question is not certain, and this problem should be discussed. Are the people asking about fasting that was obligatory for Jews, or are they asking about the additional fasting that was observed by some religious groups? If the first possibility would be preferred, the behavior of Jesus' disciples had to be evaluated as direct disobedience to the Mosaic Law²³. If the second possibility is preferred, Jesus and his disciples restricted their fasting only to the obligatory part, neglecting the fasting custom as a sign of zealous devotion. Considering the following context of Mk 2: 19–20, the second option seems to be more proper. Jesus' answer to the people is in the form of a rhetorical question, containing the statement that his disciple will fast when the time of mourning comes (Mk 2: 20), but according to Jesus, right now, there is no reason for his disciples to fast only in order to display their devotion as commonly performed by some groups within Judaism (Mk 2: 19). This answer is amplified by another indirect statement that is concluded from Jesus' parable (Mk 2: 21–22), and it concerns Jesus' strong determination to manage his new movement in a way that differs from that practiced by the Pharisees and John's disciples. Mark exposes Jesus as the leader, who provides the "new quality" in the "new form".

This is the very first account where some people make a kind of a "comparative compline" about Jesus and his disciples' behavior regarding religious tradition, particularly the obligation for fasting. The question is directly addressed to Jesus, which indicates that the source of the disciples' attitude toward this tradition is their leader. It may be possible to take the people's question just as a sign of their curiosity in the behavior of the new movement. However, the answer of Mark's Jesus left no doubt that a comparative attitude is in focus here. The fact that the people put John's disciples and the Pharisees on the same side (concerning this particular issue), and then compared their attitude with the attitude of Jesus' disciples may indirectly expose the people's discontent toward Jesus' attitude toward the custom of fasting. This makes this case to be a social and religious problem that is not restricted to particular bias toward Jesus' movement, but rather concerns the observance of the tradition widely accepted and regarded by Jewish society. In our opinion, this is the main purpose of Mark's narrative in Mk 2 where some controversial attitudes of Jesus and his disciples are progressively discussed.

4.3. Exposition of the Relationship between John and Jesus

Mk 2: 18–22 does not directly contain information concerning the relationship between John and Jesus, because in his narrative, Mark chose to expose as little as possible about this

disciples, where John's disciples and the Pharisees were set up as the argument for their objections. E. P. Gould, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, p. 109.

²² Mainstream Judaism observes only three major fasts during the year (during the Day of Atonement, New Year, and the national fast of previous calamities). However, some religious groups like the Pharisees, who fasted twice a week (Monday and Thursday), practiced it according to their particular regulations. B. Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 124.

²³ It seems that in this way, the passage is interpreted by Healy. M. Healy, *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 62.

relationship. For this reason, from Mk 2 to the end of the Gospel, although the theme of John will occasionally appear in the narrative, the case of John will be “used” as a “comparative argument” in discussions that directly or indirectly include the person of Jesus. The narrative regarding the controversies of fasting is the first one, where, instead of John, his disciples in an indirect way are compared to Jesus (indirectly) and Jesus’ disciples (directly). The verb ἔρχονται - *they came* indicates “people in general” without specifying a particular group²⁴. That means that Mark refers here to the common opinion of society, which evaluates the behavior of the new movement using the comparative method. The movement is compared to the Pharisees (a long-standing religious group) and to the disciples of John (who according to Mark were recent but still existed prior to Jesus’ movement), where both of these groups seem to be exposed as the kind of standard behavior expected also from Jesus’ disciples. This comparison makes Jesus and his disciples a group of “bad guys” that hardly adhere to the expectations of society. It indirectly shows that John and his followers were seen as a movement smoothly integrated within the common tradition of Judaism. However, this can’t be said about Jesus’ messianic movement, which was under criticism due to, in the best case, neglecting the tradition of Palestinian Judaism. Jesus’ answer to the people’s question directly in a little bit of a bold manner exposes that this attitude is consciously and deliberately chosen as the mission strategy with which the movement determined to use to approach society (Mk 2: 21–22).

Mk 2: 18–22 shows that John’s movement was also determined to “renew” and “prepare” society for the appearance of the Messiah, and it did this in an old-fashioned way, repeating the methods of the ancient prophets, who, with harsh words and strict observance of the tradition, attempted to change their society’s way of living. Contrary to this, Mark’s Jesus presented his movement as something new, something that was not yet seen, something that in order to expose its full power and message, needed to some extent depart from traditional ways, but without cutting the roots it came from. That means that, Mark, despite the common aim of both John’s and Jesus’ movements, directly exposes crucial differences in the way of their realization, which is the point that according to Mk 2: 18 was also detected by the Jewish society.

4.4. Comparison of the Relationship between John and Jesus as it is Presented in Mk 2: 18–22 and Mt 9: 14–17

Comparing Mark’s version of the event (Mk 2: 18–22) to the version found in Matthew (Mt 9: 14–17), Mark includes some extensions in verses 18 and 19²⁵. However, the most significant difference between these two versions concerns the agent posing the question to Jesus (Mt 9: 14; Mk 2: 18). In Mt 9: 14, the agents are the disciples of John themselves, but in Mk 2: 18, the agents are the people. Matthew looks at the event as a problem within the two messianic

²⁴ M. Boring, *Mark*, p. 84.

²⁵ Compared to Mt 9: 14, Mark’s version (Mk 2: 18–22) in verse 18 has the addition “*now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting*” and in verse 19 has another addition “*as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.*” There are other places with minor variations of the texts.

movements, while Mark sees the event as a social problem. The consequence of different approaches makes Matthew's version seem exclusive (the problem concerns only the two messianic movements), and Mark's version inclusive (the behavior of Jesus' movement seems to be a wilder social problem). Matthew's version is deliberately narrowed in order to amplify the relation between both messianic movements, which is a general approach to the exposition of this topic in his Gospel. Similarly, Mark, in order to separate these two messianic movements (Mark's general approach to this topic in his Gospel), presents the event in its public context for an obviously comparative purpose. Where Matthew's version compares an attitude of two messianic movements, Mark's version compares Jesus' movement with contemporary mainstream Judaism.

Another minor difference regards the placement of the event in both Gospels. In Matthew's Gospel, the event is placed in the section concerning Jesus' miracles that serve as the sign of the approaching of God's Kingdom (Mt 8: 1–9: 38), which directly follows Jesus' speeches about the kingdom of God (Mt 5: 1–7: 29). This context allows one to suppose that Mt 9: 14–17, although it does not concern miracles, is nonetheless seen by Matthew as the sign of the Kingdom of God approaching (Mt 9: 16–17). In Mark's Gospel, however, the event is placed almost at the beginning of the section exclusively concerning the controversial attitude of Jesus (directly) and his movement (indirectly), where the issue of fasting is just another case exposing mainstream Judaism's lack of recognition of Jesus (Mk 2: 1–3: 35).

5. Herod Antipas about Jesus (Mk 6: 14–29)

After presenting the people's opinion about Jesus' messianic movement's attitude compared to the attitudes of John's disciples and the Pharisees in Mk 2: 18–22, Mark proceeds with a presentation of indirect comparison between John and Jesus. This comparison is made by Herod Antipas, who is wrongly named by Mark as the king. This makes the account of Mk 6: 14–29 take on a quite peculiar character.

5.1. The Text of Mk 6: 14–29

¹⁴ Καὶ ἤκουσεν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡρώδης, φανερόν γὰρ ἐγένετο τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔλεγον ὅτι Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτίζων ἐγήγερται ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐνεργοῦσιν αἱ δυνάμεις ἐν αὐτῷ. ¹⁵ ἄλλοι δὲ ἔλεγον ὅτι Ἠλίας ἐστίν· ἄλλοι δὲ ἔλεγον ὅτι προφῆτης ὡς εἰς τῶν προφητῶν. ¹⁶ ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἡρώδης ἔλεγεν· ὃν ἐγὼ ἀπεκεφάλισα Ἰωάννην, οὗτος ἡγήρθη. ¹⁷ Αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ Ἡρώδης ἀποστείλας ἐκράτησεν τὸν Ἰωάννην καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν ἐν φυλακῇ διὰ Ἡρωδιάδα τὴν γυναῖκα Φιλίππου τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι αὐτὴν ἐγάμησεν. ¹⁸ ἔλεγεν γὰρ ὁ Ἰωάννης τῷ Ἡρώδῃ ὅτι οὐκ ἔξεστίν σοι ἔχειν τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου. ¹⁹ ἢ δὲ Ἡρῳδιάς ἐνεῖχεν αὐτῷ καὶ ἠθέληεν αὐτὸν ἀποκτείνειν, καὶ οὐκ ἠδύνατο. ²⁰ ὁ γὰρ Ἡρώδης ἐφοβεῖτο τὸν Ἰωάννην, εἰδὼς αὐτὸν ἄνδρα δίκαιον καὶ ἅγιον, καὶ συνετήρει αὐτόν, καὶ ἀκούσας αὐτοῦ πολλὰ ἠπόρει, καὶ ἠδέως αὐτοῦ ἤκουεν. ²¹ Καὶ γενομένης ἡμέρας εὐκαίρου ὅτε Ἡρώδης τοῖς γενεσίοις αὐτοῦ δείπνον ἐποίησεν τοῖς μεγιστάσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῖς χιλιάρχοις καὶ τοῖς πρώτοις τῆς Γαλιλαίας, ²² καὶ εἰσελθούσης τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτοῦ Ἡρῳδιάδος καὶ ὀρχησαμένης ἤρεσεν τῷ Ἡρώδῃ καὶ τοῖς συνανακειμένοις. εἶπεν ὁ βασιλεὺς τῷ κορασίῳ· αἰτήσόν με ὃ ἐὰν θέλῃς, καὶ δώσω σοι. ²³ καὶ ᾤμωσεν αὐτῇ [πολλὰ] ὅ τι ἐάν με αἰτήσῃς

δώσω σοι ἕως ἡμίσεος τῆς βασιλείας μου.

²⁴ καὶ ἐξεληθοῦσα εἶπεν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτῆς· τί αἰτήσωμαι; ἡ δὲ εἶπεν· τὴν κεφαλὴν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτίζοντος. ²⁵ καὶ εἰσελθοῦσα εὐθὺς μετὰ σπουδῆς πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα ᾗτήσατο λέγουσα· θέλω ἵνα ἐξαυτῆς δῶς μοι ἐπὶ πίνακι τὴν κεφαλὴν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ. ²⁶ καὶ περίλυπος γενόμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς διὰ τοὺς ὅρκους καὶ τοὺς ἀνακειμένους οὐκ ἠθέλησεν ἀθετῆσαι αὐτήν. ²⁷ καὶ εὐθὺς ἀποστείλας ὁ βασιλεὺς σπεκουλάτορα ἐπέταξεν ἐνέγκαι τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἀπελθὼν ἀπεκεφάλισεν αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ φυλακῇ ²⁸ καὶ ἤνεγκεν τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ πίνακι καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτὴν τῷ κορασίῳ, καὶ τὸ κοράσιον ἔδωκεν αὐτὴν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτῆς. ²⁹ καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἦλθον καὶ ἦραν τὸ πτῶμα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔθηκαν αὐτὸ ἐν μνημείῳ. (Mk 6: 14–29)

¹⁴ King Herod heard about it, for his fame had become widespread, and people were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead; that is why mighty powers are at work in him." ¹⁵ Others were saying, "He is Elijah"; still others, "He is a prophet like any of the prophets." ¹⁶ But when Herod learned of it, he said, "It is John whom I beheaded. He has been raised up." ¹⁷ Herod was the one who had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had married. ¹⁸ John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹ Herodias harbored a grudge against him and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so. ²⁰ Herod feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man, and kept him in custody. When he heard him speak he was very much perplexed, yet he liked to listen to him. ²¹ She had an opportunity one day when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his courtiers, his military officers, and the leading men of Galilee. ²² Herodias's own daughter came in and performed a dance that delighted Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask of me whatever you wish and I will grant it to you." ²³ He even swore [many things] to her, "I will grant you whatever you ask of me, even to half of my kingdom." ²⁴ She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the Baptist." ²⁵ The girl hurried back to the king's presence and made her request, "I want you to give me at once on a platter the head of John the Baptist." ²⁶ The king was deeply distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests he did not wish to break his word to her. ²⁷ So he promptly dispatched an executioner with orders to bring back his head. He went off and beheaded him in the prison. ²⁸ He brought in the head on a platter and gave it to the girl. The girl in turn gave it to her mother. ²⁹ When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. (Mk 6: 14–29)

5.2. Literary Analysis of the Text

The text of Mk 6: 14–29 mostly concerns the circumstances of John the Baptist's death (Mk 6: 17–29), which is necessary background for Herod's opinion about Jesus. Herod Antipas, titled by Mark as "king" even though he was named by Rome only the tetrarch, was the subject of John's harsh criticism due to Herod's marriage with the wife of his brother Filip (Mk 6: 17). This criticism was the direct reason for John's arrest. Herodias, the wife of Herod Antipas, was determined from the beginning to kill John because of her great hatred towards him, but her wish was tempered by Herod himself, who respected John as an important figure in Judean society. According to Mark, Herod, to some extent, was influenced by John's teaching (Mk 6: 20). John's death, according to Mark's narrative, is directly caused by "the mother and daughter's plot" (Mk 6: 21–28), which finally forced Herod to sacrifice John in order to fulfil his unwise promise (Mk 6: 26).

Concerning the relation between Herod and John, the criticism toward Herod from the side

of John was another way John fulfilled his task to call the nation to repentance, which also included the tetrarch. On other hand, Herod's respect for John's mission to the nation may suggest his interest in John's introduction of eschatological times, which possibly could interest the tetrarch for political consequences, rather than for a pure religious outcome.

Despite the fact that the circumstance of John's beheading is placed after Herod's opinion about Jesus (Mk 6: 14–16), it is the necessary background to correctly understand the Tetrarch's words. Mk 6: 14 shows that Jesus became famous also in the region of Judea and became the subject of people's speculations regarding his dignity. According to the general public opinion, Jesus was the resurrected John the Baptist (Mk 6: 4), which was also the opinion shared by the Tetrarch Herod Antipas (Mk 6: 16). There were also other opinions according to which Jesus was Elijah or the kind of prophet from the old days (Mk 6: 15). However, Mark's narrative (Mk 6: 14–16) strongly indicates that the opinion regarding Jesus as John the Baptist *redivivus* is directly pointed to by the author as the most accurate. This conclusion needs a more detailed explanation that will clarify the relation between John the Baptist's beheading by Herod Antipas, and Jesus, about whom some people thought was John the Baptist *redivivus*.

5.3. Exposition of the Relationship between John and Jesus.

Mark's approach to the narrative of Mk 6: 17–29 suggests that the main aim he wishes to achieve is to expose Tetrarch Herod Antipas' opinion regarding the dignity of Jesus. Markan Herod has heard three different opinions about Jesus (Jesus is a resurrected John the Baptizer; Jesus is Elijah; Jesus is like one of the prophets from the old times), and from among them, he chooses to support the most controversial one (Mk 6: 14–16). Indirectly, Mark points to Herod Antipas as a person of high social position who realizes that Jesus is someone more important than a prophet (Mk 6: 16). However, it is hardly likely that Herod Antipas takes the expression in a literal sense, saying that John the Baptist, whom he beheaded, after his death was resurrected and now is continuing his work as Jesus of Nazareth. More possible is the figurative sense of Herod's statement about Jesus. Connecting Jesus' works with John's works suggests that Herod sees the activities of John and the activities of Jesus as one and the same continuing action, where the activities of Jesus are on a higher level than that of John according to the common opinion (Mk 6: 14). Despite the harsh criticism of John, Herod Antipas respected John for his witness to his faith, and gladly put attention to his words. In some cases, John's words (Mk 6: 20) even made him feel afraid (ἐφοβείτο - *feared*). Most probably, Herod was afraid of John's criticism about his marriage to the wife of his brother, which can greatly influence Judean society opinion, reducing a chance for the realization of his political ambitions. The plot of his wife that ends extremely unfortunately for his political ambitions was the beheading of John, which deeply reduced his popularity in Judea, on the one hand, and turned into a level of insecurity for his political hopes, on the other²⁶. In this circumstance, the appearance of a man like John, who is famous not only for his teaching (like John) but also for

²⁶ Cf. quotation of Josephus in Myers' book. Ch. Myers, *Biding the Man Strong Man. Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, Orbis Books 1988, New York, p. 215.

his “power at work” , gives Herod an opportunity to make up his socio-political mistake by pointing (in a highly figurative sense) to a kind of “upgrading of John’s power at work” that is the direct result of his resurrection²⁷. In this way, Herod attempts to put in the public space an opinion that the unfortunate beheading of John brought about a greater result²⁸. Although Herod’s statement about Jesus has its socio-political background, Mark uses it as a direct indication of the superiority of Jesus’ “power at work” by comparing it to John’s activities, as it was seen by public opinion.

5.4. Comparison of the Relationship between John and Jesus as it is Presented in Mk 6: 14–29 and Mt 14: 1–12

Concerning the comparison of Mark’s narrative with Matthew’s narrative, the *meritum* of the story (Herod Antipas’ statement regarding Jesus) is exposed in both narratives almost in identical ways (Mk 6: 14; Mt 14: 2). However, the Mark’s version has an extension (Mk 6: 15–16) that puts the statement in the wider context of other possibilities from which Herod Antipas chooses from (Mk 6: 16). Matthew, in his exposition of Herod’s statement, uses the direct and exclusive approach (Herod’s opinion is the only one), while Mark uses the indirect and inclusive approach (Herod chooses one from many options). This approach makes Mark’s version to be more concentrated on the personal relationship between Herod Antipas and the case of John the Baptist. It especially concerns the responsibility for John’s beheading (Mk 6: 16), but this aspect is absent in Matthew’s version. Matthew’s version directly gives Herod’s statement (Mt 14: 2) without mentioning other possibilities. Further, Matthew’s Herod says this statement only to his servants (Mt 14: 1), while Mark’s Herod says his statement as the contradiction to the other possibilities circulating among people.

Concerning the relationship between Jesus and John, based on the narrative of Mk 6: 14–16 almost nothing can be said about it. This is due to the fact that even both names are mentioned in the narrative and they are the subject of Tetrarch Herod Antipas’ statement, the direct relationship between John and Jesus is omitted (John and Jesus interaction), and only the indirect relationship is exposed (people compare John and Jesus). *De facto*, it is only possible to talk about how people see the relationship between these two candidates for title of the Messiah, where the opinion of Herod Antipas is on critical importance in both narratives (the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark). However, it does not automatically show how John and Jesus saw the relationship between themselves.

Concerning the narrative regarding John’s beheading (Mk 6: 17–29), Mark’s narrative has some additions compared to Matthew’s text. According to Mark, the person who wishes to put John to death was Herodias, and the person who prevented it for a while was Herod Antipas (Mk 6: 19). According to Matthew, however, it was Herod Antipas who wanted to kill John, and the opinion of the people was what prevented him (Mt 14: 5). Also, according to Mark, Herod Antipas married Herodias (Mk 6: 17), but Matthew suggests that he was involved with her

²⁷ It is rather impossible that Herod Antipas shares the view of the Pharisees about the resurrection of the dead. R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8*: 26, Thomas Nelson 1989, Mexico City, pp. 325–327.

²⁸ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, The Paternoster Press 2002, Grand Rapids, p. 254.

without being married to her (Mt 14: 3). Concerning the narrative regarding the event during which the doom of John was determined, Mark's version is more extensively literally elaborated (especially the dialogs) while Matthew's version is more direct.

However, the biggest difference in the versions of Matthew and Mark concerns the title associated to name of Herod Antipas. Matthew correctly named him Tetrarch Herod Antipas, but Mark named him King Herod Antipas, which is an obvious mistake if judged from a strictly historical and legalistic point of view, though Herod Antipas quite often was titled "the king" by the people²⁹.

6. Peter's Conversion (Mk 8: 27–30)

After the readers of Mark's Gospel acknowledge the people's and the Tetrarch's opinions about Jesus, now Mark's narrative (Mk 8: 27–30) exposes an opinion of the Twelve. Even though the one who speaks is only Peter, he acts as the leader of the twelve disciples, exposing the truth that only those who believe in Jesus are capable of recognizing his dignity.

6.1. The Text of Mk 8: 27–30

²⁷ Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς κώμας Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου· καὶ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἐπηρώτα τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ λέγων αὐτοῖς· τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι; ²⁸ οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ λέγοντες [ὅτι] Ἰωάννην τὸν βαπτιστὴν, καὶ ἄλλοι Ἠλίαν, ἄλλοι δὲ ὅτι εἷς τῶν προφητῶν. ²⁹ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπηρώτα αὐτοὺς· ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι; ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος λέγει αὐτῷ· σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστός. ³⁰ καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ. (Mk 8: 27–30)

²⁷ Now Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸ They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." ²⁹ And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Messiah." ³⁰ Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him. (Mk 8: 27–30)

6.2. Literary Analysis of the Text.

The very short text of Mk 8: 27–30 concerns the same topic presented in Mk 6: 14–29, namely, the opinion regarding the dignity of Jesus. However, despite being the same topic, exposition of it is placed in a different context and in different social circumstances. The topic of Jesus' dignity is a matter addressed by Jesus to his disciples during their journey to the village of Caesarea Philippi located near the source of the Jordan River (Mk 8: 27)³⁰. The

²⁹ J. R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, pp. 183–185.

³⁰ Herod the Great incorporated the place in 20 BC and built there the temple for "a new god" Caesar Octavius Augustus. Tetrarch Philip built the city (3 BC), which became the administrative capitol of his dominion. The narrative by Mark (Mk 8: 27–20) has occurred during the time when the tetrarch of this region was Philip. However, this Philip was married to Salome, the daughter of Herodias, but he is not the Philip mentioned in the narrative of Mk 6: 17. The Philip

answer of the disciples includes almost the same setting of possibilities that were presented in Mk 6: 14–15 (John the Baptist but without mentioning his resurrection; Elijah; one of the prophets). This answer is followed by another question by Jesus, which progresses the narrative, exposing Jesus' disciples' answer (Mk 8: 29). The only one whose answer is presented by Mark is Peter's, but all disciples were ordered to keep his answer for themselves (Mk 8: 30).

The event, sometimes called "the confession of Peter", took place on the road to Caesarea Philippi, which at that time, was the city where Herod the Great built the temple for divine Caesar Octavius Augustus³¹. Although quite often Peter's confession at that place is interpreted by scholars as Mark's exposition of true faith in Jesus and revealing the "Messianic secret" of Jesus, when considering the narrative of Mk 6: 14–29, which has the same topic as Mk 8: 27–30, it is probably more appropriate to interpret the event at Caesarea Philippi as a thematical continuation of the narrative regarding Herod Antipas' statement³². Herod's statement offered a final conclusion regarding Jesus (Jesus is the resurrected John the Baptist), which obviously is far from true, but it points to the fact that Jesus is someone more powerful than John. Peter's confession includes the true identification of Jesus' dignity. In this way, using the diptych literature exposition, Mark indicates that only the disciples of Jesus are capable of recognizing his dignity, which is the interpretation that possibly may help us to look at "the prohibition" included in Mk 8: 30 from a different perspective.

6.3. Exposition of the Relationship between John and Jesus.

The narrative is particularly focused on Jesus, who is the main agent initiating the topic of conversation, which from the very beginning was headed for the exposition of the disciples' recognition of him. Jesus' first question about public evaluations of him brought from the side of the disciples an answer that was commonly shared by the people of Judea and similar to the opinion of Tetrarch Herod Antipas (Mk 6: 14–17). The answer contains the name of John the Baptist, which indicates again that Jesus, during his public activities, was compared to John's achievements to the point that people thought that Jesus was actually John the Baptist. Mk 8: 28 suggests that the disciples of Jesus took the common evaluation of Jesus in a figurative way, namely, that Jesus in his ministry is like John in his ministry, or Jesus is a prophet like Elijah due to his contribution to Judaism and the nation. This points to a positive evaluation of Jesus by public opinion. Jesus' second question to the disciples may possibly suggest that this evaluation, although positive, is not appropriate³³. That makes the disciples' answer to the first question to be incorrect because Jesus does not want his disciples to stay on this level of their

mentioned in Mk 6: 17 is quite difficult to identify based on the available sources. H. W. Hoehner, Herodian Dynasty, in: C. A. Evans & S. E. Porter (eds), *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, InterVarsity Press 2000, Downer Grove, pp. 485–494.

³¹ J. R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, pp. 245–247.

³² Concerning the widely discussed theme of "Jesus' Messianic secret" (Mk 8: 30), cf. R. Y. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, pp. 330–331.

³³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, pp. 326–328.

recognition of his dignity. The second question forced the disciples to cross the line and to take one step more to express their recognition of Jesus' dignity, which is far different and less comfortable than that shared by public opinion. Peter, in the name of the twelve, confesses that Jesus is the Messiah, and that is the claim that transcends all already known comparisons. Peter's confession makes Jesus to be the only one with such dignity. Indirectly, it exposes John the Baptist, Elijah and other prophets as inferior to Jesus in dignity. In a positive way, finally Jesus' disciples also recognized the uniqueness of Jesus and his ministry, even if their full understanding of Jesus' mission in which they also are involved still lies ahead of them.

6.4. Comparison of the Relationship between John and Jesus as it is Presented in Mk 8: 27–30 and Mt 16: 13–20

Concerning the comparison of Mark's version of the story with Matthew's version of the story, it must be said that in general, Mark's account is shorter than Matthew's account, which also includes Jesus' speech to Peter after his confession (Mt 16: 17–19) that is not included in Mark's version. Because of that, from Mark's version it is impossible to determine the source of Peter's knowledge about Jesus' messianic dignity, which gives his confession an informative character. In Matthew version, after Peter's confession (Mt 16: 16), Matthew includes the speech of Jesus, where the source of Peter's knowledge about Jesus' dignity came from God Himself (Mt 16: 17)³⁴. However, this difference does not change the main message of the story, which is that Jesus is the Messiah, and it became known to his disciples.

Another differences between Mark and Matthew's versions regards how Peter is named. Mark only uses the name "Peter", which makes him to be kind of person representing the twelve, but Matthew uses the name "Simon Peter", which together with Jesus' speech to Peter after his confession (Mt 16: 17–19) indicates that Peter spoke for himself and not for the twelve.

The next minor difference concerns including the name of the prophet Jeremiah (Mt 16: 14) in the list of people's opinions about Jesus. This name is omitted in Mark's version. Different also is the geographical setting of the event. Mark places the narrative on the road to the village of Caesarea Philippi (Mk 8: 27), but Matthew placed it "in the district of Caesarea Philippi" (Mt 16: 13). However, these is only a minor problem, but Mark's reason for describing Caesarea Philippi as the village is of much interest, since in the first century AD, the place was a city.

The last difference concerns the first question asked by Jesus. Mark writes "*Who do men say that I am?*" (Mk 8: 27), but Mathew has "*Who do men say that the Son of man is?*" (Mt 16: 13). Despite these differences, both expressions clearly indicated that Jesus refers to himself³⁵.

7. The Dignity of John and Jesus (Mk 11: 27–33)

This is the last account in Mark's Gospel regarding the relations between Jesus and John,

³⁴ M. L. Strauss, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Mark*, pp. 360–362.

³⁵ L. Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Inter-Varsity Press 1992, Leicester, pp. 418–419.

and it shows that the dignity of John and the dignity of Jesus comes from the same source, namely, from God Himself. However, despite having the same source, the dignities of John (the prophet) and Jesus (the Messiah) are different. Although these dignities are different, both of them were denied by the authority of Judaism.

7.1. The Text of Mk 11: 27–33

²⁷ Καὶ ἔρχονται πάλιν εἰς Ἱερουσόλυμα. καὶ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ περιπατοῦντος αὐτοῦ ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ²⁸ καὶ ἔλεγον αὐτῷ· ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιεῖς; ἢ τίς σοι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἵνα ταῦτα ποιῇς; ²⁹ Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἐπερωτήσω ὑμᾶς ἓνα λόγον, καὶ ἀποκρίθητέ μοι καὶ ἐρῶ ὑμῖν ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιῶ. ³⁰ τὸ βάπτισμα τὸ Ἰωάννου ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἦν ἢ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων; ἀποκρίθητέ μοι. ³¹ Καὶ διελογίζοντο πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς λέγοντες· ἐὰν εἴπωμεν· ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, ἐρεῖ· διὰ τί [οὖν] οὐκ ἐπιστεύσατε αὐτῷ; ³² ἀλλ' εἴπωμεν· ἐξ ἀνθρώπων; ἐφοβοῦντο τὸν ὄχλον· ἅπαντες γὰρ εἶχον τὸν Ἰωάννην ὄντως ὅτι προφήτης ἦν. ³³ Καὶ ἀποκριθέντες τῷ Ἰησοῦ λέγουσιν· οὐκ οἶδαμεν. καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει αὐτοῖς· οὐδὲ ἐγὼ λέγω ὑμῖν ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιῶ. (Mk 11: 27–33)

²⁷ *They returned once more to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple area, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders approached him* ²⁸ *and said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things? Or who gave you this authority to do them?"* ²⁹ *Jesus said to them, "I shall ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things."* ³⁰ *Was John's baptism of heavenly or of human origin? Answer me."* ³¹ *They discussed this among themselves and said, "If we say, 'Of heavenly origin,' he will say, '[Then] why did you not believe him?'"* ³² *But shall we say, 'Of human origin?'"— they feared the crowd, for they all thought John really was a prophet.* ³³ *So they said to Jesus in reply, "We do not know." Then Jesus said to them, "Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things."* (Mk 11: 27–33)

7.2. Literary Analysis of the Text

The direct background for the narrative of Mk 11: 27–33 is the narrative regarding Jesus' actions in the Temple (Mk 11: 15–19), which however, is separated from the continuing narrative of Mk 11: 27–33 by a narrative concerning a different theme, namely, the conclusion of the story about the fig tree elaborated by Mark in two separated accounts (Mk 11: 12–14, 20–26)³⁶. The account of Mk 11: 27–33 starts with the information that Jesus and his disciples again came to Jerusalem after spending the night outside the walls of the city. This information links the present story with the story of the expulsion of the merchants from the Temple, which was the action directly leading to the conflict between Jesus and the Sanhedrin (Mk 11: 15–19). When Jesus entered the Temple, he was surrounded by the authorities of the Temple, who openly questioned his authority for actions presented in Mk 11: 15–19. Instead of receiving the answer to their question, they were confronted Jesus' question addressed to them regarding the source of John the Baptist's authority to baptize the people of Jerusalem and Judea (Mk 11: 29–30). The Temple authority was perfectly convinced that John's authority did

³⁶ These determined the structure of this chapter as ABA¹B¹, where the A and A¹ concerns the narrative of the fig tree, and B and B¹ concerns the conflict between Jesus and Sanhedrin.

not come from people (in other words, from them), or that John's activities had divine authorization, however, they were also aware of the purpose of Jesus' question, which *de facto* was a kind of a trap for their question (Mk 11: 31–32). Despite the fact of knowing the truth, the authorities of the Temple refused to give the answer, which allows Jesus to refuse answering their question (Mk 11: 28). Indirectly, this narrative expose that, according to Mark (Mk 11: 31), Jesus' conviction is that the authority of John and his own authority come from God.

7.3. Exposition of the Relationship between John and Jesus

In the last narrative regarding the relationship between Jesus and John, Mark made Jesus the main protagonist exposing this relation. Jesus is asking the question about the authority of John the Baptist, with full consciousness that John did not act according to the will or prerogative of the Temple's authorities. He also knows that John's activities were well accepted by the people of Judea, but not necessarily by the Sanhedrin, as Mk 11: 31 directly indicates. Based on that, it is possible to conclude that, according to Mark, although the activities of John were to some extent tolerated by the Temple authorities, it does not mean that the Sanhedrin recognized John as one sent by God. The same can be said about Jesus' activities, which were not recognized by the Temple authorities, which directly led to the lack of recognition of his divine dignity.

Jesus' dialog with the Sanhedrin exposes Jesus' conviction that John's authority came from God as well as his own. However, there is a difference in their authorities. John's authority is on the level of the prophets from the old times, but Jesus' authority greatly exceeded John's as his authority is that of the Messiah promised by God to the nation.

7.4. Comparison of the Relationship between John and Jesus as it is Presented in Mk 11: 27–33 and Mt 21: 23–27

Comparing these two narratives, several differences can be detected. The first concerns the introduction, where Mark indicated that Jesus and his disciples spent the night outside the walls of Jerusalem (Mk 11: 27), but Matthew just informs that Jesus entered the Temple. However, Matthew previously had informed that Jesus spent the night outside the city (Mt 21: 18). The second difference is minor, and it concerns the omission in Mark's narrative of the information that Jesus was teaching in the Temple (Mt 21: 23). Instead, Mark indicates that Jesus was walking in the Temple when the Sanhedrin approached him. The third difference regards a small change in the question addressed to Jesus. Mark's version "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?" has ἢ - *or* between two parts of the sentence, which suggests two possible sources of the authority (Mk 11: 28)³⁷. Matthew's version, on the other hand, connects these two parts of the question by καὶ - *and*, which suggests only one source of the authority³⁸. The last difference in both narratives

³⁷ Strauss thinks differently. He thinks that the authorities' question contains two parallel questions, where the second clarifying the first. M. L. Strauss, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Mark*, pp. 504–505.

³⁸ Osborne rightly indicates that both questions concentrate on the same topic, namely authority, but the first focus on

concerns the deliberation of the Sanhedrin about the answer they should give to Jesus. In Mark's version, it is Mark who informs readers that the Sanhedrin was afraid of the people (Mk 11: 32), but in Matthew's version, it is the Sanhedrin who informs readers about the fact that they are afraid about the people (Mt 21: 26). Mark's approach is in accordance with his general attitude towards exposition of the narrative, where the reporting manner prevails.

All these differences do not change the main conclusion in both narratives, which concerns the fact that the Sanhedrin did not recognize the authority of John (the prophet) nor did they recognize the authority of Jesus (the Messiah).

Conclusion

The exposition of the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospel of Mark has three main characteristics. The first of them concerns the way in which this relationship is presented. Among seven narratives, which in direct or indirect ways regard the topic, only one contains the direct encounter of John and Jesus, namely, the account regarding Jesus' baptism (Mk 1: 9–11). However, even this account does not contain a detailed exposition of the encounter between Jesus and John, including only the information that Jesus was baptized by John³⁹. Other accounts regarding the topic (with exception to Mk 11: 27–33) always present the relationship between John and Jesus in an indirect way, using the agent(s) in third person singular or plural, which directly indicates that someone else is talking or comparing Jesus with John. *De facto*, Mark makes great effort to minimize the direct relation between Jesus and John to only a necessary degree, on the one hand, and puts great interest in focusing on the indirect and comparative relationship between these two leaders on the other hand.

Despite this narrative approach, Mark presents a coherent and logically progressing exposition of the topic, which is the second characteristic of Mark's exposition. He starts it with an introduction of John (Mk 1: 4–8), which is directly followed by the account regarding Jesus being baptized by John (Mk 1: 9–11) and the indication of John's public ministry, which according to Mark, is directly connected with the beginning of Jesus' public ministry (Mk 1: 14–15). In these three accounts, the narrator is Mark himself, who exposes information in a way that suits his narrative strategy, namely to connect the mission activity of John and Jesus without directly connecting the leaders of the movements. This section is followed by another three accounts, where instead of Mark, the narrators are people exposing his thoughts and critiques regarding John or Jesus. This section starts with an account about the controversy regarding fasting, which was strictly adhered to by John's disciples but not exactly by Jesus' disciples (Mk 2: 18–22), where people accepted John's disciples' attitude, but had some doubts

the type of the authority and the second on the subject yielding that authority. G. R. Osborne, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Matthew*, p. 776.

³⁹ Contrary to exposition of this topic in the Matthew Gospel (Mt 3: 15–17), where the dialog between Jesus and John is included.

about Jesus' disciples' attitude. It is followed by the very first opinion directly concerning Jesus' dignity, which is expressed by Tetrarch Herod Antipas (Mk 6: 14–29), who thought that Jesus was the resurrected John the Baptist. The last narrative in this section is the account of Peter's confession, which for the very first time directly points to Jesus' Messianic dignity (Mk 8: 27–30).

The theme regarding the relationship between Jesus and John is exposed in a progressive way, where the first three accounts (Mk 1: 4–8; Mk 1: 9–11; Mk 1: 14–15) regard introductive information about John and Jesus, and the other three accounts (Mk 2: 18–22; Mk 6: 14–29; Mk 8: 27–30) regard people's opinion about Jesus and his movement. These two sets create a complementary exposition of the topic, which finds its apogee in the last account (Mk 11: 27–33) concerning Jesus' debate with the Sanhedrin, during which Jesus indirectly points to God as the source of John's and also the source of his authority. However, John possesses the authority of a prophet, and Jesus possesses the authority of the Messiah, but in both cases, these authorities were not accepted by the authority of the Temple. Mark, from the very beginning of the exposition of this topic to its end, makes clear that John is just the prophet, and Jesus is the Messiah.